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College and university response to the sense of anomie experienced by students --especially those attending large, complex institutions-- has been to implement several plans for reducing the students' feelings of impersonality and estrangement. In one of these plans, based on the "ombudsman" concept, students register complaints to 1 individual, who conducts an impartial investigation, reports to the appropriate authority, and makes other efforts to achieve desired results. An informal survey of Western colleges and universities was made in August, 1968 to ascertain to what extent this kind of plan has been utilized. Twenty-nine of the responding institutions had studied the concept, 24 had not, 9 had rejected it, and only 7 had some form of ombudsman program. Student and staff reactions to the program ranged from neutral to positive. Of the 29 institutions that had studied the concept, 20 had student bodies of more than 5,000 FTE (Full-Time Equivalent), and 16 of the 24 that had not considered such a program had student bodies of less than 5,000 FTE. Survey results suggest that requirements unique to the institution involved determine the appropriateness of the ombudsman idea. Due to a number of factors, larger state-supported institutions tend to consider the concept much sooner than small state or privately-supported institutions. The report contains a list of the 53 responding institutions, and selected data collected during the survey. (WM)

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# THE OMBUDSMAN

## An Informal Survey of the Implementation of the Ombudsman Concept

Summer, 1968

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October, 1968

The information contained herein is based upon a survey of the implementation of the ombudsman idea among Western colleges and universities as reported during the summer of 1968. As a result the report does not reflect institutional program developed after September 1968. The information obtain has been summarized and abstracted for ease of presentation.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Office of the Dean of Students
University of Southern California

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# THE OMBUDSMAN

## An Informal Survey of the Implementation of the Ombudsman Concept

Summer, 1968

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We have heard a great deal in recent years about the sense of estrangement and alienation many students feel in their college or university, particularly the large, complex institution. These students feel lost in the increasingly elaborate bureaucracy of the campus and sense that their individuality is reduced as regulations and red tape multiply and service becomes more impersonal. Some respond by withdrawal while others strike out against the university in an effort to make the perceived authority structure more responsive to their needs. Colleges and universities, in turn, have experimented with various plans and proposals designed to reduce this sense of anomie on the part of these students.

One such plan is derived from the Scandinavian "ombudsman"--a term which translates from the Swedish as the "agent of justice" for the common man. The ombudsman is an impartial and independent official of high status who receives and investigates complaints from citizens and recommends remedial action. He has no independent authority but depends upon investigation, persuasion, and publicity to achieve the desired ends. Many colleges and universities have investigated the concept and several have instituted an office which plays this role in some form or another.

In the summer of 1968 the Office of the Dean of Students at the University of Southern California made an informal survey to determine to what extent the ombudsman concept has been implemented among Western colleges and universities. Fifty-three of sixty institutions responded and the results are summarized below.

Summary

Twenty-nine (54%) of the responding institutions in the survey reported having studied the ombudsman concept while the remaining 24 reported no investigation of the concept at this time. Of the 53 responding institutions in the survey only seven, or 13%, reported have implemented some form of an ombudsman program. Reported observations on student and staff reactions toward the ombudsman concept at these institutions ranged from neutral to positive. Those institutions supporting the ombudsman concept for whatever reason are reported in the Question #3 responses.

Of the institutions responding "Yes" to Question #2 - "Has your college or university made a study of the ombudsman plan?" - 20 of the 29 responses (69%) were from institutions with student bodies of more than 5,000 FTE (Full-time Equivalent). On the other hand, 16 of the 24 (66%) institutions responding "No" to the same question came from institutions with student bodies of less than 5,000 FTE.

All nine of the reported rejections of the concept after having studied it (Question #3) came from state institutions, eight of which have student bodies of over 5,000 FTE. Interestingly enough, nine of the 13 institutions (69%) indicating that the status of the concept was "still pending" were state supported, ten of the 13

institutions with student bodies of over 5,000 FTE.

## Observations

Only a small number of institutions have accepted the ombudsman concept to the point of implementing it. Yet, the survey results suggest that there are factors involved which are forcing the larger state supported institutions to look at the concept much earlier than smaller institutions, either state or privately supported. The institutions having implemented the ombudsman concept, the diversity of titles, the nature of the person doing the appointing, and the person to whom the ombudsman reports, all suggest that the appropriateness of the ombudsman idea is determined by requirements unique to each of the institutions involved.

Some attitudes toward the rejection of the ombudsman plan are reflected in the abstracted statements to Question #4 - "If considered and then rejected, can you tell us why?" - and those responses from institutions responding "No" to Question #2.

This survey was taken during August of this year. It is quite possible that some of the institutions that had indicated a "pending status" on the question of an ombudsman for their campus at the time of the survey have implemented such a program by the time this report is written.

## Results

### Responding Institutions

| Public | Private |
|---|---|
| Arizona State University | Brigham Young University |
| California State College, Dominguez Hills | California Western University |
| California State College, Fullerton | Chapman College |
| California State College, Long Beach | Claremont Graduate School |
| California State College, Los Angeles | Claremont Men's College |
| California State Polytechnic College | Loyola University of Los Angeles |
| Chico State College | Mills College |
| Colorado State University | Occidental College |
| Eastern New Mexico University | Pepperdine College |
| Fresno State College | Pitzer College |
| Idaho State University | Pomona College |
| Mt. San Antonio College | Scripps College |
| New Mexico State University | Stanford University |
| Oregon State University | The Church College of Hawaii |
| Oregon Technical Institute | Tulane University |
| Pasadena College | University of Denver |
| Portland State College | University of Pacific |
| San Fernando Valley State College | University of Redlands |
| San Francisco State College | Whittier College |
| Sonoma State College | |
| State University of New York | |
| University of California, Davis | |
| University of California, Irvine | |
| University of California, Los Angeles | |

| Public | Private |
|---|---|
| University of California, Riverside | |
| University of California, San Diego | |
| University of California, Santa Barbara | |
| University of Hawaii | |
| University of New Mexico | |
| University of Oregon | |
| University of Tennessee | |
| University of Washington | |
| University of Wyoming | |
| Washington State University | |

Question (2) - Has your college/university made a study of the ombudsman plan?

(A) Response: Yes

| Private | State | All |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | 24 | 29 |

(B) Response: No

| Private | State | All |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | 11 | 24 |

Question (3) - Has it been implemented? - rejected: - still pending?

(A) Response: Implemented

| Private | State | All |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | 4 | 7 |

| Public | Private |
|---|---|
| California State College, Los Angeles | Scripps College |
| San Fernando Valley State College | Stanford University |
| Sonoma State College | University of Denver |
| University of California, Irvine | |

(B) Response: Rejected

| Private | State | All |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 9 | 9 |

(C) Response: Still pending

| Private | State | All |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 9 | 13 |

Question (4) - If considered and then rejected, can you tell us why? (responses are abstracted for ease of presentation)

* We did not feel that under our conditions and circumstances the ombudsman plan would be a useful tool to us.

* At the present time (we) find no need for an ombudsman project, due to the fact that the student affairs staff and other administrative (officers) are not rigid and do offer an effective voice for students. Student/faculty and administrative groups have been jointly involved in all facets of the campus community organization with great success.

* Both student and administrative reactions have been negative.

* Lack of demonstrated need - lack of interest.

* Because I can see no reason for appointing (an) ombudsman to the job that deans are supposed to do and I am unwilling to make good deans do something else!

* (We) have not yet developed factions or special interest groups unable to communicate with each other.

Question (5) - If you have an ombudsman(men), who appoints him?

* Committee of faculty, students, staff

* A student representative - appointed by the Student Council

* Dean of Students

* Chancellor

* President

* Local Chapter of AAUP

Question (6) - To whom does he report administratively?

* President

* Dean of Students

* Student Senate

* Vice-Chancellor, Student Affairs

* Director of Counseling, Dean of Students

* Local Chapter of AAUP

Question (7) - What title did you give your ombudsman?

* Counselor at Large
* Director, Innovations in Student Life
* Ombudsman
* Associate Dean of Students
* Consultant in Student Affairs
* Ombudsman Board
* Grievance Committee

Comments from institutions responding No to Question #2 (Has your college/university made a study of the ombudsman plan?)

* I think greater efficiency within our own services should precede going the ombudsman route - unless he becomes an efficiency expert.
* Without the formality of plan, design and official, or portfolio assignment, we have endeavored to incorporate the ombudsman concept in our routine student affairs work.
* We do not at the present feel the need for more administrative "red tape."
* The subject is naturally current on our campus but we have had no formal study made of it. One group of students clamored a bit last year for the appointment of an ombudsman. Who knows what the new year will bring?
* Other means seem more effective for our small campus.
* We have a small student body which permits the Dean of Students and staff to operate as effectively as one can under the present situation.
* Whatever happened to the concept of friendship? That's always been a pretty good ombudsman. If friendship fails, there are always parents, chaplains, psychologists, etc.